

# The Berkeley Beacon

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## SGA leadership pledges sustainability, accessibility, accountability



Chand and Pittman. Courtesy / Pittman

Maeve Lawler  
Beacon Staff

Emerson's Student Government Association onboards a new president and vice president following its spring semester election cycle. Pranita Chand, a senior data science and economics major, and Neiko Pittman, a junior media arts production major will serve as the 2022-23 president and vice president.

Last spring, the pair ran on a joint ticket, eventually winning and taking office at the end of the semester. Once instated, Chand and Pittman worked throughout the summer to formulate their long-term goals—many centered around sustainability, boosting Emerson spirit, and holding Emerson organizations to a higher standard.

"We're committed to making student lives better at Emerson and that's what we want to do, that's what we have been assigned to do in this role, that's why we campaign to do so," Chand said in an interview with the Beacon.

In his sophomore year, Chand served as SGA's Marlboro interdisciplinary senator and was later

elected as vice president his junior year. Now as president, he is responsible for the Academic Senate—a group of "elected representatives from various departments on campus."

"[Who] all directly report to me and I am responsible for making sure that the voices of the students in those academic departments are being well observed and carried out," Chand explained.

Along with overseeing the Academic Senate, Chand is also responsible for the executive board, class councils, and leading SGA's general assembly meetings.

Pittman joined SGA the second semester of his freshman year as visual media arts senator for the Academic Senate. The next year, he became the Lion Pride senator for the Student Experience Senate—a position he created to help boost school morale.

"The Student Experience Senate is responsible for a lot of advocacy...especially population representation on campus," Pittman said.

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## First-years share first impressions

Hannah Nguyen  
Beacon Staff

No masks, no Zoom, no COVID restrictions—the class of 2026's first semester doesn't look all that different from the beginning of high school.

While the class had a far-from-normal education experience throughout high school, many are optimistic about their future at Emerson. With loosened COVID policies—including a lift on mask and testing mandates—a sense of normalcy returns to Emerson. The college introduced roughly 1,000 first-year and 185 transfer students representing 31 countries and 39 states (and the District of Columbia).

While touring colleges, theater and performance major Ariel Coleman said she felt more inspired at Emerson than at other schools.

"I just felt like I really connected with the other creatives that I met here," Coleman said. "[Emerson is] the perfect place to be immersed [in] everything creative."

## Comedy news programs are paving the way for a new era

Gabel Strickland  
Correspondent

They conduct interviews with high profile figures, expose corruption in large corporations, and keep you up to date on the latest political news. And, somehow, they manage to make you laugh. They're comedians. Uh, I mean, they're reporters. Well ... they're kind of both, aren't they?

I'm talking about the personalities behind comedic news programs like "The Daily Show," "Last Week Tonight," "The Patriot Act," "The Tonight Show," and many others. These shows belong to a genre that uniquely blends elements of journalism with those of comedy to deliver the news with a humorous twist. While political satire can be found in various forms of comedy, it is these television programs that most closely overlap with the area of traditional news broadcasting in their content, format, and style. As a result, their writers and hosts have found themselves with job descriptions somewhere between "comedian" and "reporter."

Many of us came to Emerson to participate in its prestigious journalism and comedy programs. Therefore, any one of us could easily find ourselves navigating this peculiar position over the course of our careers. But how do we do so responsibly? As a journalism major with a minor in Comedic Writing and Performance, I found myself intrigued by this question and talked to some professionals and Emerson professors to get some answers.

In the past, people involved in the creation of such comedy-news shows have rejected the idea that this is even a question. Most notably, Jon Stewart, former host of "The Daily Show," was known to reinforce in interviews that he was a comedian, not a journalist.

Nevertheless, studies suggest

his role was much more ambiguous than that. A 2012 study conducted by Pew Research Center found that "about one in 10 Americans—12%—regularly get news from comedy programs such as "The Daily Show," "Saturday Night Live" or "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno." Up from 9% in January, it is now on par with public radio and national newspapers."

Other studies have found that audience members tune into these shows with the express intention of learning the news, and that "The Colbert Report" was actually more successful in educating its viewers about super political action committees ahead of the 2012 presidential election than many other types of news media. Plenty of Americans get both news and comedy from these programs.

One such person is Matt McMahan, the assistant director of the Center for Comedic Arts at Emerson College. He has published research on a variety of subjects in comedy, exploring the medium from both a theoretical and historical perspective.

"I remember [Stewart] being pressured a lot to admit that people in my generation were getting our news from him," McMahan said. "And he adamantly denied that. He was like, 'people come to me for comedy, they don't come to me for the news.' But I was watching him say this, and I'm like 'I don't know, John, I go to you for news.'"

Jeff Maurer, a former writer on "Last Week Tonight," considered these hybrid responsibilities often during his six years working on the show.

"This is always the question, right? Are you comedy or are you news? Here's my answer to that: we're on television. That's the only part I knew for sure," Maurer said.

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## From France to Emerson, men's soccer recruit travels internationally to find his place in the world of sport

Leo Kagan  
Correspondent

First-generation students, without guidance from older family members or friends, and limited access to resources, face a far more challenging acclimation to college life than most.

Roughly 15 percent of each class is made up of first-generation students, The Emerson men's soccer team added a new international player to its roster, recruiting freshman midfielder Hugo Berville from Villejuif, France ahead of the 2022 season.

With 11 players being welcomed into the program, there are plenty of new faces but only one player

from overseas. Berville will start his college career with the Lions, continuing his passion for the sport he started at age 7.

He grew up playing for his local club, Paris 13 Atletico, with the goal of joining a French soccer academy to develop his skills and ascend the ranks of French soccer to the professional level. Unfortunately, the invitation Berville dreamed of never came. Many in his situation would be crushed, but today, he sees it as a positive.

"A lot of people are in these academies, but only a few go professional," he said. "All of these players have hope, and they only focus on the goal that is being pro... all the players that don't get pro usually don't have any back-

ups, and it's a real shame."

"They focused only on football, and left everything else," he continued. "When you do, you have that hope to be professional. When everything all falls down, you're in a pretty bad position."

He noted that the infatuation with the sport frequently becomes a problem for the majority of young academy players who don't turn pro, left without a backup plan for their future. Berville, however, is determined to be different.

"The thing that I've always wanted to do is play the sport I love every day and still have that education in case," he said. "Even if I love football more than anything, I could not only focus myself on one thing and leave everything else on the side."

His passion for education was

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Women's volleyball goes 2-0 in Sunday double-header, Pg. 8



Sophomore Hugo Berville at practice in August. Courtesy / Darius Boamah



# News

## Emerson Staff Union demonstartion demands cost-of-living adjustment, equitable conditions



The Staff Union demonstrates outside of Piano Row/ Courtesy Adri Pray

Adri Pray and Hannah Nguyen  
Beacon Staff

Conversation about the staff union buzzed Thursday morning as faculty members entered the Bobbi Brown and Steven Plofker Gym for the 2022 Faculty Institute. Many people donned “I support the Emerson staff union” stickers on their shirts or read fliers outlining where the staff union is stuck in its negotiations.

The Faculty Institute is an annual tradition at Emerson at which the president, provost, and assembly and union faculty heads welcome new and returning faculty at the beginning of the academic year. The Institute serves as an opportunity to understand the college’s goals for the upcoming year, meet colleagues, celebrate faculty achievements, and discuss college-wide academic topics, according to the college’s website.

Beginning at 9 a.m., Interim Provost Jan Roberts-Breslin’s introduction kicked off the event followed by a welcome speech from Interim President William Gilligan. Roberts-Breslin and Gilligan introduced new faculty from each school, and thanked faculty and administrative leaders who took on interim roles. They both announced upcoming campus events and updated faculty on policies from academic affairs.

While discussing faculty achievemnts, the class of 2026, and Emerson’s goals for the upcoming academic year, Gilligan also addressed the ongoing contract negotiations with the staff union in his speech.

“As the third generation of a union family myself, a member of two unions myself, including having been a union officer, I want you to know from my personal perspective, the college continues to bargain with the SEIU in good faith,” Gilligan said. “I have great hope that we will come to an amicable conclusion.”

AFEC-AAUP President Barry Marshall then reflected on how far the faculty union has come since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the AFEC-AAUP and the ECCAAUP worked hard with the previous administration to advance and redefine the idea of shared governance, he said.

“It was an important step, in terms of going forward...This year we are hiring a mental health person for faculty,” Marshall said.

Before relinquishing the podium, Marshall reaffirmed his position with the staff union.

“We stand with the Emerson staff union, yes we do,” he said, waving the leaflet. “Unions are on the march and they’re not going to back down.”

The faculty union will vote for a new AFEC-AAUP president and vice president later this month.

As the Institute adjourned, Emerson staff union members congregated outside of Piano Row with posters and flyers, calling for equitable working conditions, fair and competitive wages, and the ratification of the union’s second contract. Various Emerson community members joined in their demonstration in solidarity, some chanting “union busting is disgusting,” and “Boston is a

union town,” while others wrote messages on the sidewalk with chalk demanding action.

The union ratified its first four-year contract in 2018, which was extended after its expiration earlier this year. It began negotiating its second contract Sept. 1, 2021, demanding a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), equitable working conditions, and diversity, equity, and inclusion benefits.

Staff members agreed to postpone raises and allowed the college to pause contributing to their retirement funds in 2020 due to unprecedented pandemic-related costs with the promise to resume both as the pandemic continued. In 2021, raises were postponed until January, then pushed to October, then withheld indefinitely because the union is in negotiations, according to Instructional Technologist Illona Yukhayev.

“[The college] did a market study and determined 78% of our staff members are below what’s considered competitive in our peer institutions,” Yukhayev said. “They know they’re underpaying us, and they want to move us to what’s considered competitive over four years. [In] four years, those numbers are going to be outdated anyway.”

Thursday marked one year since the negotiations started, but Yukhayev, like the majority of staff union members, believes the contract is six months overdue. To make matters more frustrating, the retroactive wage hasn’t been agreed upon for the staff union’s contract, potentially allowing new hires to make more money than more experienced employees.

“My department is hiring for another person in my exact role; that person is going to make a higher salary,” Instructional Technologist Isobel Rounovski said. “If they’re hired before our contract is ratified, that person is going to make more money than me, which is not fair. I’ve been here for almost three years.”

Throughout the demonstration, many staff union members raised concerns about how the college prioritized buildings rather than the needs of their staff members.

“Emerson needs to prioritize people over the other agendas that they have to make sure that people who are working at Emerson

don’t have to get a second job to pay their rent, they’re not on food stamps, they’re not living in conditions that are too poor to live in the city that the college is in,” Interim Director of Production and Safety Homa Sarabi-Daunais said.

Unlike the staff union contract, the AFEC-AAUP faculty union contract addresses COLA in relation to Boston’s consumer price

index. Each September, the faculty union’s salaries increase by either 2% or the percentage change in Boston’s CPI-U up to 4%.

“We want to show the leadership and scholars that faculty support us; they want to see us get positive increases and the faculty do have it in their contract,” Yukhayev said. “They have won it in their fights. We’re trying to get it in ours.”

## Limited COVID restrictions leave first-years optimistic

Cont. from Pg. 1

Cheyenne Kminek, a writing, literature, and publishing major, said she committed to Emerson because the college values the arts, which Kminek appreciates as it provides plenty of opportunities for students.

“There’s a lot of great opportunities to move forward,” Kminek said. “Coming from a small town in the south, there’s not a lot of opportunities to expand on a career in the arts, so Emerson was the best choice for me career-wise.”

First-year international students and students of color moved in Aug. 26 and 27 for pre-orientation, while remaining first-year students moved in between Aug. 28 and Sept. 1. Despite the bustle of first-year move-in, many students said it went smoothly.

“The process was really speedy because the [move-in assistants] got all of my stuff out of the car and up to my room really fast,” visual and media arts major Khatima Bulmer said.

Many students also found orientation to be worthwhile, easing potential move-in week anxieties.

“[Orientation] gave me a lot of opportunities to meet new people, and it just showed me what Emerson is about,” VMA major Adeline Melillo said.

Kminek said she enjoyed attending orientation events, hearing from different clubs, and learning about resources on campus as they helped her feel more prepared and supported in what could be a very stressful transition.

Coleman moved in early for the students of color orientation and found it to be an opportunity to connect with students who shared her passions and life experiences.

“I was the only Black female in my [high school] classes,” Coleman said. “I feel like pre-orientation really gave me the chance to see other students and talk to them and feel like Emerson is more of a home rather than just another PWI.”

During his first class on Tuesday, theater and performance major

Sofonyas Alevachew noticed the minimal number of students—10 in total—in his class, a setting that allowed him to connect with peers and professors.

“The teachers are actually going to notice me,” Alevachew said. “They’re going to know how I’m doing and what I’m doing.”

Kminek echoed this sentiment. “[This] is helpful in the educational environment to make sure that everyone has the same opportunity to meet with a professor and kind of move forward in their own individual endeavors and goals.”

While many students had a positive first impression of the college, some found the new experience overwhelming.

“I honestly love [Emerson],” VMA major Nicole Vota said. “There are some things I’m not 100% used to, like the food and being away from home, but I’m slowly getting used to everything.”

For Coleman, being around other talented students is exciting, but adds the need to stand out. In high school, many students had talents that made them unique among their peers. At Emerson, most students find that they have shared passion with others.

“You have a lot of people who come here for the same passions as you and so that’s definitely a lot of pressure, but at the same time, it makes it fun, it makes everything new and interesting,” Coleman said.

Regardless of that pressure, many find that students of all different majors continue to work together and build a community.

“I love how dedicated everyone is to their major and what they love to do,” Alevachew said. “[All of the majors] are intertwined with each other. It [makes it] a more cohesive community... it allows us to come together as a community and create.”

## Office of Equal Opportunity extends Title IX

Adri Pray  
Beacon Staff

The Office of Equal Opportunity will expand the scope of responsibility of the former Office of Title IX following its absorption of the office in August.

The OEO will serve as the college’s on-campus discrimination resource, addressing issues of harassment, sexual violence, and discrimination for students, faculty, and staff, along with managing the responsibilities left by the Title IX Office.

“OEO is a robust and comprehensive resource for the community expanding its work to address the concerns of the entire Emerson community on all campuses,” Title IX and ADA/Section 504 Coordinator Sonia Jurado wrote in a statement.

Prior to accepting her role at Emerson, Juardo acted as the director of the OEO at Brandeis University. In her new role, she leads the OEO, working alongside Deputy Title IX Coordinator/Investigator Amy Condon. The office hopes to hire two more full-time staff members to the office—another deputy and a department coordinator—before the conclusion of the fall semester.

Investigators are responsible for reviewing cases, listening to impacted parties, and investigating incidents. The department coordinator helps manage the work of the office.

The introduction of the new office comes following criticisms the college received in April regarding the rumored lack of a Title IX Office.

Students alleged that Emerson operated without a Title IX office as information regarding staff to report incidents to could not be found—an allegation Vice President and Dean of Campus Life Jim Hoppe put to rest at the Faculty Institute earlier this month.

“There’s a rumor going around that for a period of time last year we did not have a Title IX Office,” Hoppe said. “We have never not had a Title IX Office. There’s always been staff, always been an attorney.”

Jurado was unable to comment on how the former Title IX Office handled prior cases but pledged OEO to be very responsive to all reports and allow all impacted parties to control what happens within their case.

“In some situations, an impacted party may choose to pursue a formal complaint, where OEO would conduct a full investigation into the alleged conduct,” she wrote. “There are also other informal options available as alternatives to a formal investigation that someone can choose instead.”

In a formal complaint, OEO will gather information as a “neutral factfinder” in order to understand what happened in a situation. Individuals trained in making informed decisions based on the findings of OEO investigations would then decide if the conduct violated the college’s policy. With complaints where the impacted party is looking for an informal resolution—things like No Contact Orders—steps like educational conversations with the responsible party or housing and class changes can be taken. Both processes are uniform for students, faculty, and staff.

“Our response is very much tailored to the needs and experience of the impacted party,” Jurado wrote. “We also make sure to connect people with support resources both on and off campus.”

The office acts as a place of accountability for those offenders, she continued, noting collaboration between community services is a necessary part of accountability. Jurado anticipates the Social Justice Center to be a critical part of working to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence.

OEO hopes to start the academic year with open forums where community members can meet and learn more about the office and welcomes invitations to speak to groups, provide presentations, or answer questions.





Emerson’s former COVID-19 testing center / Hongyu Li *Beacon Archives*

# New COVID-19 policies ‘fared well’ over summer, remain in fall

Maddie Khaw  
Beacon Staff

As the fall semester begins, students return to an Emerson with the most relaxed COVID-19 policies since the start of the pandemic.

Following a shift in COVID protocol over the summer, the college switched to a symptomatic-only testing model, implemented an “isolate-in-place” model for those who test positive, and opted for a mask-optional policy in all campus spaces except the Emerson Wellness Center and Office of the Arts spaces.

“These policy changes fared well over the summer,” said Christina Paris, associate director of the Emerson Wellness Center. “We are optimistic [that] the current policies, and adherence to them, will help keep the Emerson community safe and proactive against COVID-19.”

According to Paris, the college saw 30 COVID cases throughout the summer, with students reporting their positive test results through the COVID-19 Self-Report Form. Upon testing positive, students received information regarding isolation procedures and when to return to campus.

Senior creative writing major Sisel Gelman said she feels “pretty safe” on campus, but acknowledged that others might not.

“[For] my individual health, I’m not so concerned because I feel that currently I’m quite immune,” she said. “But I know that a lot of students who are more immunocompromised do feel very strongly that Emerson policies have [relaxed too much].”

Gelman described the experience of her friend who contracted COVID while on campus this summer and isolated in her dormitory. Unlike past procedures, the college did not deliver meals to her room. Now, COVID-positive students must venture out, properly masked, to public spaces like the dining hall to access to-go food and other necessities.

“I found it shocking that the new policy will not bring meals to students,” Gelman said. “If we’re trying to minimize risk, that’s the first place Emerson could change policies.”

For junior visual and media arts

major Abbie Attridge, this quarantine method also raised concern around shared living spaces. Should an on-campus student contract COVID, they are required to isolate-in-place, meaning roommates are subjugated to daily exposure.

“I have a roommate,” Attridge said. “If I get COVID, I’m giving it to her.”

Despite this, Attridge still feels comfortable with the college’s mask-optional policy, which provides a sense of normalcy that many people crave after experiencing more than two years of the pandemic.

“I’m kind of sick of wearing the mask,” she said. “Honestly, I think everybody is. I know there’s a risk [that] I can still get it. [But] I’m kind of fine with the risk—I know I’m not going to die from COVID, and knowing that makes me more comfortable.”

Attridge also noted that without weekly surveillance testing, asymptomatic COVID cases could spread undetected.

“If they’re asymptomatic... they can’t just go and test, so they don’t know [they have COVID],” she said.

While the mask mandate no longer stands in most campus spaces, the vaccination requirement remains. The college mandates all community members who live, work, or study on any of Emerson’s campuses remain up-to-date with COVID vaccinations, provided they don’t have an approved religious or medical exemption, according to Paris.

The college’s vaccination rate currently sits at 95%, with vaccinated students facing a notably lesser risk of severe infection. Although breakthrough infections may occur and COVID risk depends on a number of factors besides immunization status, an unvaccinated person is 29 times as likely to end up hospitalized from COVID as a vaccinated person and five times as likely to get infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“I’m glad [administration is] making us be vaccinated,” Attridge said. “That says to me they understand it’s real, they understand it’s dangerous, so we’ve got to have [the vaccine] and protect people.”

However, the mask-optional policy leads junior stage and production management major Delene Beauchamp to feel “nervous” about COVID risk.

“I think that collectively, the world has been like, ‘The pandemic is over’ and it’s very much not,” Beauchamp said. “COVID hasn’t gone away, and especially with the rise of monkeypox and how that can be transmitted, I think masks should still be mandatory in classroom spaces.”

The United States has seen growing concern over the spread of monkeypox over the summer, with almost 20,000 confirmed cases in the country, including more than 300 confirmed cases in Massachusetts alone, according to CDC data.

The college continually monitors “the state of monkeypox nationwide and in our city,” stated associate director Paris. “We have developed protocols and will soon share more information to the Emerson Community on the OneEmerson website.”

Although monkeypox does not share the same airborne transmissibility as COVID, Beauchamp noted the importance of taking this virus just as seriously, as it spreads through direct skin-to-skin contact.

“People are treating [monkeypox] the same way people treated COVID in March 2020, and it’s like, I guess we learned nothing,” he said. “There’s not a ton of accessible information... It’s really hard to stay in the know about something that is rapidly evolving and changing every day.”

With rising concern surrounding both monkeypox and COVID, Beauchamp said he plans to remain masked in all campus spaces, “for the safety of myself and others.”

“I think there’s this need to make life how it was before, but that is impossible,” he said. “There was this global event that [has] shifted our mindset, shifted the way we move [around] the world... At a certain point, people need to reckon with the fact that life will never go back to what we knew it was before 2020.”

## New leaders plan community-centric agenda

Cont. from Pg. 1

He added that this senate includes sustainability senators, intercultural senators, international senators, non-traditional senators, LGBTQ+ senators.

Chand and Pittman’s first goal of the year is a laundry detergent initiative in collaboration with Generation Conscious, a non-profit dedicated to producing affordable, zero-waste hygiene products. Generation Conscious also works to provide college campuses with laundry detergent sheet refill stations—a machine that dispenses water, plastic, and waste-free detergent sheets that can be purchased with a subscription plan.

“Neiko has been instrumental in partnering with [Generation Conscious] and creating initiatives,” Chand said. “We’re very far ahead in that process and hopefully, by the end of September we’ll have one of those laundry detergent machines on campus.”

Chand and Pittman also want to improve SGA’s accessibility to all students.

“My biggest thing I want to change is the fact that we need a fellowship amongst SGA,” Pittman said. “When I joined, stuff really felt like a power dynamic. It took a lot of pushing through jargon and understanding in order to be a part of SGA. I want to make it simpler and easier for people to join, as well as just a more welcoming place for everyone, no matter who you are.”

In an attempt to recruit more members, SGA created a new general member position as a “low commitment position” so students can get involved with SGA events, activities, legislation, and other responsibilities without a time-consuming commitment.

In light of COVID, Chand explained that SGA “revamped” its constitution to make it more streamlined and accessible. The organization created new committees like its Public Relations Committee to help foster relationships among Emerson community members. This semester, SGA also hopes to fill various roles within the organization, like class councils. Additionally, there will be an opportunity for the student body to go over the new constitution and ask SGA questions at a future date.

Chand also hopes to integrate regular academic “town hall” meetings, as well as a financial town hall as a way to address students’ financial concerns. Because inflation has been on the rise, he also hopes to organize a referendum for students to vote on if SGA should raise the student activity fee—a part of tuition used to fund student organizations—to better manage org budgets. Regardless of the outcome, Chand said SGA will act accordingly to control finances, which could mean making budget cuts to free up funds.

“As students have been demanding more financial transparency from Emerson, we want to honor that for the student body,” he said. “We will do what’s in our abilities to make sure that happens and all of the students’ concerns about how finances are being spent at Emerson will be addressed.”

In terms of affordability, Pittman wants to make laundry detergent cheaper, hoping to eliminate the cost entirely for those with lower socioeconomic standings or financial need, if not for all students.

In terms of promoting Lion pride, Pittman hopes to use SGA as the “home” of school spirit by leading school events and fostering new traditions at Emerson.

“There is a lot of Emerson culture, but, at least in terms of community, I think it can feel like a very divided and separate place at times,” Pittman said. “Everyone has their own niche little communities everywhere, but we don’t really do much school pride and big school stuff.”

“Community doesn’t always mean just your friends—it’s your sense of belonging,” Chand said. “Helping students find those communities would be one of my biggest asks from Emerson that we could improve upon.”

Chand also discussed Emerson’s Student Organization Compact—an agreement made between the college and affiliated student organizations to engage in a systematic review of its selection process, member recruitment, programming, and limits on participation, according to Emerson’s community equity action plan. This compact is part of the annual student organization reactivation process along with mandatory training from Student Engagement and Leadership and Intercultural Student Affairs regarding equity and inclusion.

“We do want to hold student orgs to a higher standard than previous years,” Chand said. “If you’re a part of a student organization you have to sign that compact, which is your commitment to uphold the spirits of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, as well as respecting people’s identities. We will be holding student orgs to that standard.”

Pittman is also part of the Student Organization Affiliation Process, a process facilitated by SEAL. Affiliate-eligible organizations must have proof of activity for at least one semester, a full-time faculty or staff advisor, five or more members, and a working constitution according to Emerson’s student organizations website.

“We’re trying to change the language [in the SOAP process] so people know the difference between an unofficial org and a registered Emerson org,” Pittman said.

Registered Emerson organizations go through the SOAP process and receive funding from SGA’s student activity fee budget. Unofficial Emerson organizations can be Emerson-associated, but don’t receive funding from the student activity fee.

Pittman hopes to give SGA “more of a name” at Emerson and plans to do so through a rally taking place on April 14. Pittman hopes to shine a spotlight on Emerson’s performance organizations, placing them all under one roof in the Cutler Majestic Theater and hinting at a surprise “special performance” to take place during the event.

He also acknowledged the hard work it takes to be in SGA as an advocate for the student body.

“It can be really hard doing the advocacy work you do in SGA because you don’t get paid to do it, and you get constantly criticized for it,” Pittman said. “Making SGA feel less ‘worky’ and more socialized and increasing our morale is part of my goals. That way it actually is a sustainable org and people still want to join and continue to do the work.”

“[We] ran on a ticket together because we were like ‘These are the changes we want to see and we want them happening now,’” Chand said of himself and Pittman. “It’s just trying to leave that one piece of legacy that carries on in the future.”



# Opinion

## ‘I’m Glad My Mom Died’ is Gen Z’s entrance to the celebrity memoir

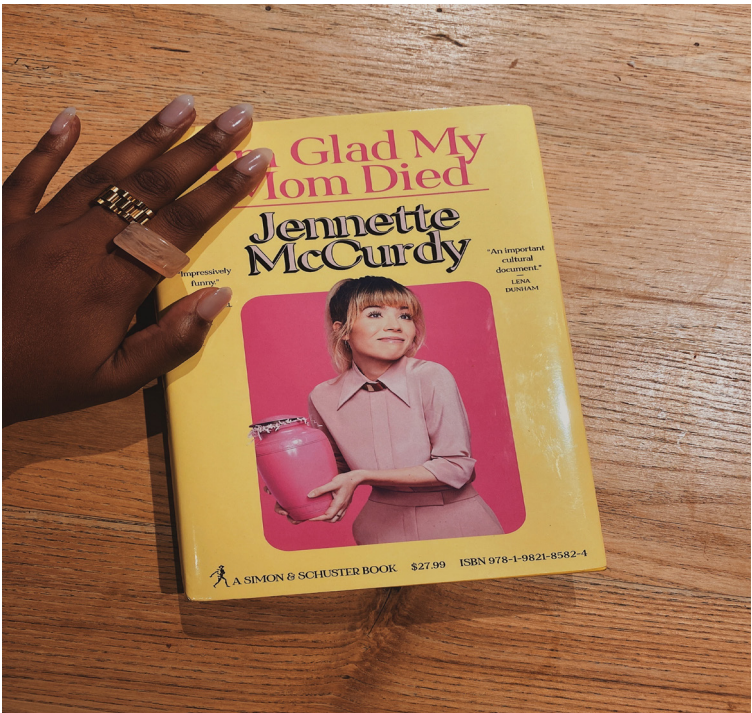
Hadera McKay  
Beacon Staff

On April 4, 2022, Entertainment Weekly released the first look of the cover of Jennette McCurdy’s memoir, “I’m Glad My Mom Died.” McCurdy, largely known as a star of the popular early 2000s Nickelodeon show, “iCarly,” is pictured in a formal, all-pink dress shirt and pants, with a tight grimace pressed onto her face as she cradles a pink urn brimming with pink confetti. The forthright nature of the memoir’s title mirrors the self-deprecat-ive style of humor of Gen-Z, and stands out as one of the many elements of Mc-Curdy’s story that has fostered a unique connection among young people.

As the first look of the cover hit so-cial media, viewers exploded with com-mentary on the former “iCarly” actor’s blunt and polarizing book title. Insta-trolls flooded McCurdy’s comments under her release post, some pondering, “Does anybody else think this is an odd book title or just me? ok.” Others openly berated McCurdy, writing, “One moment you were crying that your mother was dying of cancer and now you’re writing this book about her. Even if she was toxic as you say, the title of this book is vile.”

However, it’s this exact blunt lan-guage, along with cultural references to McCurdy’s experiences as a young woman in the media, that allow “I’m Glad My Mom Died” to connect with the younger generations in a way no other celebrity memoir has. The char-acteristics of McCurdy’s writing that make her story so impactful for Gen-Z readers are also the very elements that make the book incredibly universal.

The only thing that drowned out the middle-aged trolls was the outpour of support from the TikTok demographic. Since the release of the book itself on



Courtesy Hadera McKay

Aug. 9, 2022 (when it promptly sold out on Amazon and hit the New York Times Bestsellers list within a week), social media has been full of young people speculating about how McCurdy was treated on the set of “iCarly” by show creator Dan Schneider. Users are recording their reactions of shock and sadness via TikTok as they read the memoir, encouraging others to read the book with leaked clips of the audio book and their own comprehensive reviews.

It’s not hard to relegate the popular-ity of McCurdy’s story among young people to her former status as one of the most loved and recognizable young characters on TV. For many people be-tween the ages of 16 and 25, McCurdy

is synonymous with the butter-sock swinging, chicken-eating, sidekick character, Samantha Puckett. Viewers treasured Sam and Carly’s fiery and sweet dynamic duo for more than five years, recreated Sam’s famous “Ilove-friedchicken” dance in the mirror, and looked up to her ability to take absolute-ly no shit.

The intense familiarity young peo-ple have with McCurdy as Sam Puckett make the revelations of her personal life particularly impactful for young au-dience members. In “I’m Glad My Mom Died,” McCurdy recounts the emotional and physical abuse carried out by her mother, the intense anx-iety of performance, and her struggles

with eating disorders, grief, and mental health, all dusted with the specific pres-sures of being a visible figure for chil-dren in the media.

In an interview with the New York Times,, McCurdy’s iCarly co-star Miranda Cosgrove responded to Mc-Curdy’s struggles, saying, “You don’t expect things like that from the person in the room who’s making everyone laugh.” Similarly for young people, it’s difficult to accept that these struggles happened in tandem with our growing love for McCurdy in her “iCarly”years, and that in many ways, we potentially contributed to the anxiety she experi-enced.

As older Gen-Z viewers of “iCarly” bear witness to the abuse and stress that McCurdy experienced through her words, they are forced to reconcile with the systems of abuse in child stardom, the anxiety of fandom, and the many ways that their favorite celebrities may have been hurting in ways that were not publicly visible at the time.

Even with the incredibly serious content of the book itself, McCurdy still finds moments of levity. In heavy moments, like the drive to her mother’s funeral and a pivotal stage in her recov-ery from her eating disorders, she cites funny cultural references. From Taylor Swift to Nick Jonas to Sara Barielles’ 2013 chart topper, “Brave,” each ref-erence is a bread crumb of familiarity for the young reader — a detail that grounds us in the context of her life, but also in our own.

This element is compounded by Mc-Curdy’s bizarre humor. The title itself, “I’m Glad My Mom Died”, is a crude declaration and a reflection of the emo-tional maturity it takes to recognize the humor in loving an abusive parent but still working to combat the effects of that abuse. Much like Gen-Z, Mc-

Curdy’s humor lies just between the socially unacceptable and the wildly traumatic.

“I’m Glad My Mom Died” contains an air of self-deprecation that is apt to connect with young readers. In an inter-view with Vogue, McCurdy describes the jealousy she outlines in the book towards her former “Sam & Cat” co-star and burgeoning pop star at the time, Ariana Grande, as “comedy gold.” The comment reflects McCurdy’s emotional capacity to heal, joke, and tactfully dis-tance herself from a painful experience.

Pair that with McCurdy’s use of first-person point of view and the book becomes a sort of meta time capsule. McCurdy’s choice to write in first per-son forces her readers to cement them-selves firmly in the early 2000s and 2010s — a time older Gen-Zers were growing up — but also to have the cour-age to accept the truth of their memory alongside hers.

McCurdy’s “I’m Glad My Mom Died” has found a very specific place of comfort, discovery, and nostalgia for Gen-Z. The relationship is sewn in the book’s themes of reckoning with un-healthy parental dynamics, the experi-ence of media-influenced girlhood, and its nearly socially unacceptable spots of humor. Much like the goal of every good memoir, McCurdy has found a way to make the specific, universal.

With every reference to a time in child stardom you may not remember, there is a heartbreaking description of lone-liness. With every unhealthy behavior McCurdy uncovers about her mother, there is a subtext of learning how to rec-ognize prolonged pain, but more than that, learning how to gain the strength to honestly confront that pain and begin to heal.

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# Situational awareness: the lesson before the

## ECPD’s active shooter training

Chloe Els  
Beacon Correspondent

During orientation week, the Em-er-son College Police Department told every first year about an active shooter training offered on campus. Although new Emerson students have not had a chance to participate in this training yet, it has already imparted a valuable lesson—or at the very least a grim reminder that school shootings are not limited to K-12 campuses; they can happen in college, too.

From my first year of kindergarten to the final year of high school, there were 67 active shooter incidents in American K-12 schools. Over the past four years, in high school es-pe-cially, stories of these shootings haunted me. With every new, hor-ri-fic headline, I grieved for the vic-tims and their families. I prayed for my safety at school. I became hyper aware of potential dangers on my high school campus. When I crossed the stage at graduation, I felt relief. Cold and heavy, like I had crossed an invisible finish line. “I made it,” I told myself. I didn’t know how or why, but I made it. I felt the danger had passed.

Three months later, I arrived at Emerson College and learned about



ECPD entrance / Beacon Archives

the ALICE active shooter training program offered on campus. ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate. The aim of the program is to encourage “proac-tive tactics” in response to potential shooters on campus; new threats and very real threats I had never let myself consider before. In the past couple weeks, I have come to accept that school shootings are not limited to high school and primary educa-tion. In fact, some of the deadliest school shootings in America have

occurred at colleges: Oikos Univer-sity, Umpqua Community College, and Virginia Tech.

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This newly gained knowledge made me grieve the carefree col-lege experience I had envisioned. I felt cheated and started to wish the violence hadn’t been brought to my attention. Existing in the strange limbo period of knowing the threat before knowing how to respond to it, I felt that I would have rather just not known about it at all. I thought maybe ignorance really was bliss. Despite this, I have come to believe that there is value in my new aware-ness.

According to Bob Smith, the Chief of the ECPD, one of the main goals of the ALICE program is teaching students situational awareness, in-structing students to remain aware of their surroundings and learn to recognize threats. This skill helps students recognize and communicate threats, and, in the moment, “lessen the ability of the armed hostile in-truder to inflict harm,” Smith said.

Even before attending the training,

this idea of situational awareness has already taken hold—just know-ing the vitality of the training is an important reminder that we have not left school shootings behind. It’s devastating, but it’s critical.

For first years, the initial weeks of college often feel like a turning point. A chance to leave behind the old and embrace the new. However, not everything can be left behind, and not everything should be. There is value in embracing new lessons when addressing gun violence in a new academic setting, just as there is value in knowing we have not left threats of gun violence behind.

The ALICE training is an important lesson for the safety of every Em-er-son student, and those of us who have yet to participate in it still have a lot to learn. I hope new students at Emerson don’t disregard that the lesson has already begun. Let this be our wake up call.

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# Cape Cod Bay will probably be polluted with radioactive waste within 10 years

Adri Pray  
Beacon Staff

It is projected that by 2027 Holtec International will have disposed of one million gallons of potentially radioactive water into Cape Cod Bay. The self-described “diverse energy company” purchased the plant in 2019 with the ultimate goal of finishing the decommissioning process in a record eight years rather than in 60, like fellow nuclear energy company Entergy estimates the decommissioning will be done.

The first Boston Globe headline I saw about this was in May. The story asked year-round Cape locals from various industries how they felt about the pending nuclear dump and, just as one could guess, not a single response was positive.

Cape Cod is home to 228,996 residents year round and over 500,000 residents in the summer. Polluting the Bay pollutes all of those homes, kills the tourism industry, and harms the environment with unknown contaminants. Zinc, lead, and carcinogenic chemicals like PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) are believed to be in the water, but there has been no official confirmation—not even Holtec knows.

The Pilgrim nuclear plant in Plymouth, MA operated for 47 years before being shut down in 2019 by Holtec International, a “diversifying energy technology” company that specializes in carbon-free power generation, specifically solar and nuclear energy.

Shortly after the purchase, Holtec released a statement reassuring Massachusetts residents the decommissioning of the plant would replicate the “superb



Illustration Rachel Choi

record of public health and safety.” The company outlined its plan to store the one million gallons of nuclear waste water in a “structurally impregnable dry storage system” in less than three years, something they note is “unprecedented in [the] history of decommissioning nuclear plants.” When the waste is fully stored, the statement continued, the containers will be shipped to Holtec’s storage facility called HISTORE in New Mexico.

The problem now is disposing of the water that circulated through the reactor vessel and nuclear fuel, but an official toxin report hasn’t been released. Holtec is considering four disposal options: trucking the water to another facility, evaporating the water and discharging vapor through a ventilation

system, and long-term on-site storage.

The fourth option, arguably the cheapest and the one Holtec is likely to opt for, is dumping one million gallons of potentially radioactive—but treated—water into Cape Cod Bay.

Contaminating the Bay would kill Cape Cod’s tourism industry. The island’s population nearly doubles in the summer and the economy inflates drastically in response. Many local small businesses rely on tourists to flock to the Cape every summer so they can make enough money to hope to stay open through the winter.

As I went through high school, I worked at a locally-owned Cape business that relied on the busy summers to make it through the winter. I worked there for six years and saw the rapid

incline of tourist demand firsthand. Dumping this toxic waste into a resource the local population needs year-round should not even be considered.

Although the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said Holtec may dump the potentially radioactive into the Bay if the radioactivity levels are below a certain level, the Environmental Protection Agency warned Holtec that dumping the waste into the Bay is in clear violation of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

The least likely option Holtec would consider is evaporating the water, which it says it has done with 680,000 gallons over the past two years, but would be more challenging to do now because the old nuclear fuel used to make the vapor is in storage and can no

longer be used as a heat source.

Long-term on-site storage could, at best, delay the inevitable. It’s not safe for any living thing to be around radioactive waste for long, and to ensure the safety of the community, Holtec would have to post guards to keep the plant secure.

Trucking the water to a secure facility, storing it, and treating it would be the best option overall. Cape Cod’s economy wouldn’t die, the tourism industry would continue to thrive, locals could work year round without worrying their livelihood could be cut short at any moment, and Holtec can stay on track in decommissioning its plant.

As the future of our environment is so uncertain in this time of climate change denial, we must keep a watchful eye on the disposal of nuclear energy, especially because Japan is considering nearly the same thing with its plant, Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, except it proposes the release of 1.25 million gallons of treated radioactive wastewater into the ocean.

While Holtec hasn’t released an official decision, the future of Cape Cod Bay seems grim. It’s unfair the local population has very little say in this process, as this very well could make living on Cape Cod unsustainable. Many residents are preparing to be displaced by the potentially devastating effects of nuclear pollution.

Entertaining the idea of nuclear pollution in any instance opens the door for detrimental environmental consequences. This decommissioning will help forge the precedent of future nuclear decommissioning processes, as this isn’t the first time this has happened, and it won’t be the last.

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# Comedy news programs are paving the way for a new era of journalism

Cont. from Pg. 1

“It’s media. Is it comedy or news? I don’t know. Maybe it’s not important, but because it’s on TV and because people are watching it and because people are influenced by it, I always felt it was important to be truthful.”

The bottom line is, Maurer is right. Writers and hosts on these shows may not be wholly reporters or comedians, but the one thing they are for sure is influential. Therefore, they should use their platforms responsibly.

But what does this responsibility mean? Often, in the realm of mainstream news outlets, it means maintaining neutrality on the events they report. But things get dicey when you add comedy to the mix, as comedy is an inherently subjective art form. To tell a joke is to convince an audience to see a certain event from your perspective. This is especially true in stand-up comedy, from which many comedy-news programs draw a lot of inspiration.

There are those—Jon Stewart among them—who would argue that this is what distinguishes comedy news programs from genuine reporting. And there’s validity to that. This pillar of journalism allows the public to trust that journalists are being honest and not just trying to persuade them towards a political agenda.

But this equation of objectivity with responsibility in journalism is being increasingly called into question by professionals and the public alike. Objectivity is becoming difficult to define and

recognize—even in mainstream news outlets. We all know what objectivity means theoretically, but one could debate for hours what it actually means in practice. Furthermore, despite their efforts to appear neutral, mainstream news outlets are progressively accused by the general public of being skewed politically as to better market themselves to a specific audience.

This has given rise to news outlets that inherently reject objectivity as a synonym of journalistic responsibility. Plenty of “alternative” news outlets distinguish themselves from mainstream outlets by wearing their perspectives on their sleeves and still produce compelling journalism. Comedy news outlets find themselves in this genre of journalism in which some audiences actually prefer comedy news shows expressly for their biases, McMahan explains.

“I think the reason I respected people like Jon Stewart and other comedians who present news is that they were putting their biases front and center. They weren’t hiding the fact that they were biased, because that was very much part of their comic voice,” McMahan said. “There was no obfuscation of perspective, which the other news networks kind of hid their perspective. I thought the comedians were just more trustworthy because they were more honest about where they stood.”

How does one possibly balance all these factors?

Maurer suggests finding the right ratio of news to comedy in any given piece. You have to deliver some information critically and seriously while carefully bal-



Courtesy Gabel Strickland

ancing the laughs that make that information digestible. Maurer suggests a 70-to-30 ratio of comedy to news that can be flipped depending on the topic you’re writing about.

“I wouldn’t recommend getting the mix any more in either direction than 70-to-30 because if it goes too far, it could be all fluff. And then it’s like ‘What? This isn’t the show that I tune into.’ Or it could be all too serious, and then it’s like ‘Well, why don’t I just watch 60 Minutes if you’re just not gonna tell any jokes?’”

When you include serious, important, factual information,

Maurer says to make sure you include all of it. This is the best way to make sure that, while you are presenting the news in a humorous light, you aren’t force-feeding your audience a particular perspective. In fact, fleshing out all sides of an issue can be an opportunity to flex your comedic muscles if you do it creatively.

Jon Rineman, Emerson College professor and former writer for “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” emphasizes putting the audience first. While this means giving them the most accurate version of the day’s events, it also means providing the enter-

tainment they come to your show for.

“What goes through my mind was always ‘what is the audience going to like best?’” Rineman said. “I was fortunate because Jimmy put me in the position where I was running the monologue. He trusted me and he kind of let me make the decision on what he would rehearse in front of the rehearsal audience. I’ll be honest with you. I always put the audience first, and then I put Jimmy second.”

This makes late night programs like Fallon’s particularly comforting to watch, especially when the news is bleak. Comedy offers the unique opportunity to let these shows lift your spirits in a way that mainstream news programs don’t. Rineman recalls relying on this emotional element when writing for Jay Leno about particularly tragic events of the day.

“You do have to kind of lean into it and show your teeth a little bit,” Rineman said. “If there was a tragedy, say there was just a beloved celebrity that passed away that just shocked everybody or say there was another mass shooting or a terrible natural disaster, I think that’s where you kind of have to acknowledge it seriously, very briefly up top. And then you kind of say ‘Hey, we’re just gonna try to make you feel better.’”

Ultimately, this unique ability to appeal to both the heart and minds of audiences is what keeps these shows popular. Connecting with both in a smart, responsible way is oftentimes the key to creating positive change.

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# Living Arts

## ‘We need to change our story’: A look into ArtsEmerson’s 2022-23 season

Sophia Pargas  
Beacon Staff

ArtsEmerson will display seven in-person and two virtual performances this upcoming academic year, all of which seek to elevate minority voices and emphasize the diversity of Boston artists.

“As we enter our 12th season, we are so excited to uplift an incredible lineup of performers and productions that spark important conversations and inspire us to build a better world together,” David C. Howse, ArtsEmerson’s Executive Director, said in a press release. “We believe in artists who boldly celebrate our differences, reflect the vital diversity of our city, and deepen our connection to each other.”

The season’s lineup is heavily influenced by the theme of “re-storying,” an ideology explained by Ronee Penoi, ArtsEmerson’s Director of Artistic Programming.

“If we want to change our world, we need to change our story,” she wrote. “Re-storying is the act of rewriting our shared history, mythology, and values so that it is fully truthful, representing all people—especially those whose voices have been silenced by those who fear losing power and privilege.”

By allowing communities to

retell their own stories, ArtsEmerson hopes to send audiences away with more awareness and introspection into the artists and themselves.

“Only when our history is [re-told] can we understand who we are and where we are going,” Ponéi wrote. “I’m excited for audiences to experience these incredible works; each production asks a unique question about our understanding of ourselves and each other.”

The first of the nine productions to run will be “Drumfolk,” by Step Afrika!, playing from Oct. 5 to Oct. 16. This performance explores the time period in which Africans were banned from using drums—and the human spirit which exploded in its wake.

From Oct. 26 to Oct. 30, Bill Irwin takes to the stage and allows his audience to witness firsthand the relationship between a performer and playwright Samuel Beckett’s works. The performance, “On Beckett,” incorporates passages from Beckett’s most famous works by incorporating drama and humor.

ArtsEmerson’s first virtual event of the season, “Theatre for One: We Are Here (Nairobi Edition),” will showcase six micro-plays on ancestry and civilization by female performers all across the world. The event, di-



The Robert J. Orchard Stage, one of ArtsEmerson’s venues Beacon Archives

rected by Christine Jones and Octopus Theatricals, will take place from Nov. 4 to Nov. 6, and Nov. 17 to Nov. 20.

Director Wang Chong’s “Made in China 2.0” will run from Feb. 1 to Feb. 12, offering the audience a unique pop culture and drama experience. Through his experience directing theater in China and around the world, Wang challenges the audience to redefine their existing stereotypes of China.

From Feb. 22 to Feb. 26, audiences will experience a new take on an old tale: “Frankenstein.” This performance merges the classic storyline with a biographical account of its author Mary Shel-

ley’s life through the use of hand puppets, projectors, and live actors.

“Cointelshow: A Patriot Act,” a virtual political satire performance, will take place on March 8 to March 12. The event will chronicle COINTELPRO, an FBI counterintelligence program that disrupted the efforts of groups such as the Black Panther Party, the American Indian Movement, and individuals like Dr. Martin Luther King and Fred Hampton.

“Shadows Cast,” a dance, circus, and cinema performance directed by Raphaëlle Boitel that explores the unspoken truths of family will run from March 30 to

April 2.

On April 26 to April 30, Cherokee actress DeLanna Studi will perform her one-woman show “And So We Walked.” The show reflects on the “darkest corners of American history,” specifically the Cherokee experience during the Trail of Tears.

The final show, “Nehanda,” will take place from May 17 to May 23. This “genre-bending musical performance” follows the Shona legend of Nehanda, a powerful spirit who inhabits only women.

In addition to these events, ArtsEmerson will continue its commitment to film and engagement programming through continued partnerships with the Boston Asian American Film Festival, Boston Latino International Film Festival, Roxbury International Film Festival, and Wicked Queer: the Boston LGBTQ+ Film Festival.

The organization will also continue its Bright Lights Film Series and Play Reading Book Club, and is bringing back its Welcome to Boston Cast Parties. Additional public dialogue and civic engagement events will be announced at a later date. ArtsEmerson hopes to amplify the diverse voices of communities in Boston.

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## Alum-created Baby Teeth Film Festival centers queer filmmakers and characters

Parker Garlough  
Beacon Correspondent

The second annual Baby Teeth Film Festival will present short films created by trans and gender non-conforming individuals in a variety of genres including fantasy, comedy, and drama.

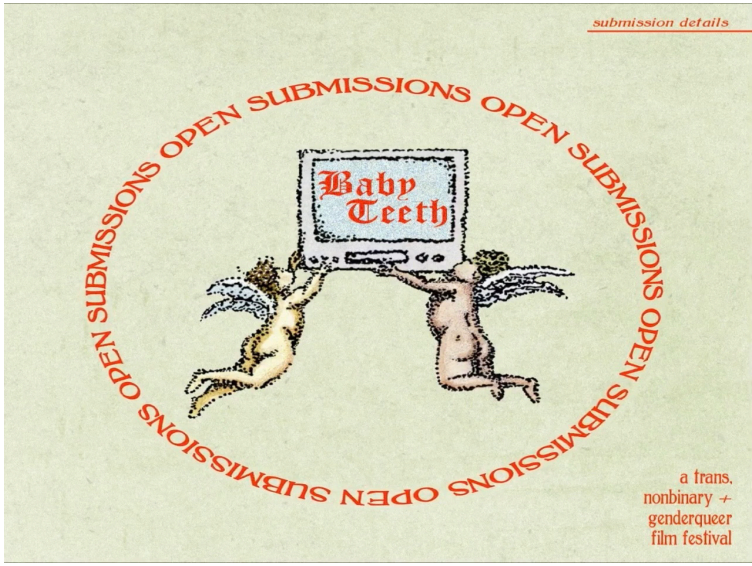
The festival, created by alumnus Sophie Schoenfeld, will take place on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 at Easy Lover in Brooklyn, NY.

Schoenfeld graduated as a Media Studies major in 2018 before going on to serve in various production, props, and music licensing roles. They also sit on the screening committee for NewFest, a New York LGBTQ+ film festival, and work as a Program Specialist for an LGBTQ+ support organization in Queens. These experiences inspired them to create Baby Teeth last year to highlight trans and gender non-conforming voices.

For Schoenfeld, it’s crucial that the festival is open to all genres, extending beyond stories that center the trans experience.

“[At other film festivals], there’s very little room for stories by trans and gender non-conforming artists that are just about anything,” they said. “It has to be a trans story or have a trans character or tell a specific angle of the filmmaker’s experience. It pigeonholes people a little bit, especially new filmmakers.”

Since the beginning of Baby Teeth Film Fest last year, Schoenfeld has gathered a team of creatives. This includes a screening



committee to balance the increased number of submissions.

“This year, when we start screening submissions, I am going to have other people watching them,” Schoenfeld said. “Last time, it was not a board, just me, because [the festival] was very small, and this year I got people together to watch the films so I’m not the only one making the judgment call. I want it to be a more honest curation.”

Schoenfeld’s team also includes Geordon Wollner, a New York Times news assistant, who has taken on a variety of responsibilities, specifically those related to marketing and outreach—something which has greatly expanded.

The first annual Baby Teeth

Film Festival was primarily advertised through word-of-mouth. Through the use of flyers and an Instagram page, it has now spread beyond Brooklyn and those with a direct connection to Schoenfeld.

Nevertheless, Wollner aims to increase the number of submissions Baby Teeth will receive, especially by connecting with other trans and gender non-conforming film groups.

“A challenge has been finding film groups to outreach to,” Wollner said. “Those groups exist, but it’s hard to get in contact with people. It’s hard to find those direct links and get the word out.”

Having personally witnessed the importance of networking and ambition for young filmmakers, Woll-

ner encourages Emerson students to put themselves out there with a new mindset.

“If networking scares you or makes you nervous, it’s important to reframe it,” Wollner said. “You’re not elevator pitching yourself, you’re just curious and you want to hear other people’s stories. Filmmakers and other creatives have that innate curiosity. Tapping into that and being able to say ‘I want to hear your story’ is a more approachable way to network.”

Schoenfeld similarly strives to support new filmmakers, in part by providing a financial incentive. The proceeds from ticket sales will fund an Audience Award, selected by popular vote on each night of the festival. Furthermore, films

that are accepted and shown at Baby Teeth Film Fest will be given an official laurel to use in further promotional materials.

As the film festival nears, those involved are eager to observe the submissions and watch the film festival grow to new heights.

“It’s been incredible to be part of the Fest in this way, because last year was the very first time [Schoenfeld] did it, and they did it all by themselves,” Wollner said. “Seeing it at this level, with so many people excited about being part of it, really means a lot. I’m proud to be here to witness all of it.”

Student filmmakers, including  
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# ‘Please Let Me In’ creates a world to be discovered at Boston Center for the Arts

Tea Perez  
Beacon Correspondent

Two alumni created an immersive art installation that brings viewers into an uncanny, uncomfortable, and vulnerable experience of stepping into a stranger’s most intimate space. M’Kenzy Cannon, a visual and media arts graduate, and Maya Rubio, a business of creative enterprises graduate, are the proud creators

we loved that process. We both really connected with going back to that performance vibe and connecting that with our greater art pieces.”

In order to create a living, breathing exhibit from just a concept, both Rubio and Cannon spent months meticulously constructing and deconstructing ideas to perfect their imperfect world. To create a space in which the audience could feel fully immersed, they needed to balance visual art with theatrical performance.

“It was really important for us to



A book and diary lay on a desk of the exhibit Tea Perez



Figurine and other objects on a table Tea Perez

of “Please Let Me In,” available for viewing in the Boston Center for the Arts until Sept. 15. The exhibition is part of BCA’s 1:1 Curatorial Initiative—a series of collaborative projects between one curator and one artist. Its purpose is to introduce a new artist or to highlight a new aspect of a more experienced artist.

An open call for this initiative came out not long after Rubio and Cannon graduated in 2021. This inspired Rubio to reach out to her former classmate and curate this installation.

“I saw [this] opportunity and I had just watched [Cannon’s] BFA film, and I was like ‘Woah, [Cannon] and I could do something,’” Rubio said. “We weren’t really calling ourselves artists and curators yet, but I felt like we could at least make a proposal.”

Prior to Rubio reaching out, Cannon had been working on her own projects. Upon learning of the initiative, however, she discovered a way to use past projects to create an installation with a larger idea.

“I’d been collecting dream recordings from my friends and some strangers,” Cannon said. “I’d also been doing an archival project, archiving photos that I’d found on Craigslist and Zillow. It felt like there was a way to pull all of these things together to create a larger installation show [displaying] that intimate experience of seeing the interior of people’s homes [and how it] can provide such a voyeuristic insight into someone’s life.”

Both Cannon and Rubio find inspiration and joy from theatre, and during their junior year at Emerson, found a way to combine this with their shared love of art. These two passions later became the inspiration behind “Please Let Me In.”

“[Cannon and I] took a class together junior year called Living Art in Real Space, and that was the first time that we had experimented in installation and performance,” Rubio said. “That gave us confidence to make something and [we] knew that

break down the space into different zones and really just think about the worlds that we were trying to create instead of focusing so much on the certain objects, and once we built the different worlds, we knew that the work and the objects would emerge,” Rubio said.

Through their combined use of photography, video, 3D elements, and performance, they provided themselves with more opportunities for creativity and freedom.

“It was very freeing for me, as someone who works primarily in film and video, to be able to extrapolate these kinds of cinematic ideas into physical objects and physical experiences,” Cannon said.

The installation is described on BCA’s website as “a piece of object-spatial theatre, an environment performance in which gallery-goers become a character in the sticky world of existential mystery.” As the gallery-goers venture deeper into the belly of what this exhibition is all about, they find glimpses into the mind and life of one stranger—and potentially themselves.

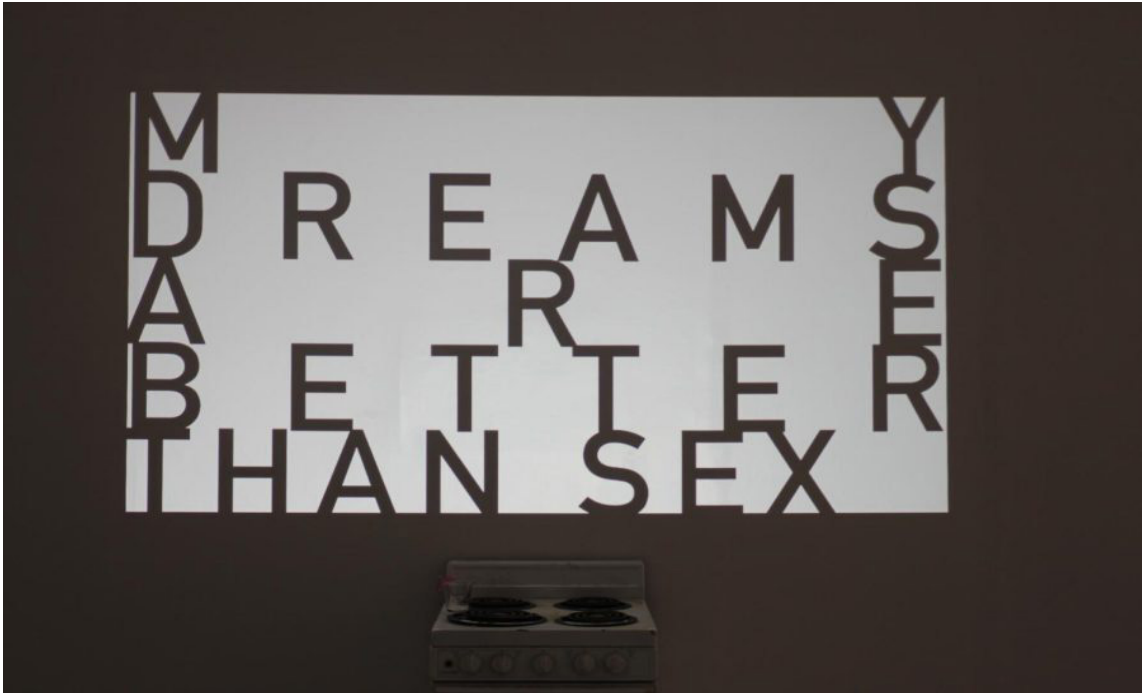
The tables and shelves littered with various knick-knacks from lives and childhoods create a stark contrast between the bleak, white walls of the venue.

Multiple projectors spark life on the once-bare walls, displaying a carousel of uncanny images showing various rooms in someone’s home. Another projector displays phrases and thoughts that are usually only found within the psyche.

“My dreams are better than sex,” one reads.

In another corner of the room are piles of mulch, but upon closer look, pieces of junk can be seen scattered and buried in the dirt. For the audience, however, there is much more to be discovered within the debris.

Does the mulch represent the burial of memories in the unconscious mind, the scraps representing the memories themselves? Does it serve to create a nostalgic feeling of play-



A monitor displays the words “my dreams are better than sex.” Tea Perez

grounds and childhood that’s been littered with the trash of reality and adulthood?

Each viewer is left to find their own answers, and that is exactly the point of the exhibit.

The exhibit’s features create a sense of existentialism as viewers find themselves in what seems to be the memories and mind of a stranger. The section of hanging photographs allows for small glimpses into this stranger’s life.

As viewers continue to venture into the past and present of the subject’s mind, the exhibit gives way for them to ponder their existence and dread their future.

Further into the exhibit sits a bedroom untouched by time, littered with the evidence of a stranger’s presence. A diary lays open on the bedside table and toiletries lay on the shelf, half used.

A bedroom is often seen as a person’s most private space, but this bedroom offers the whole tale of someone’s life. Without the room’s owner present, the audience must piece together the details themselves. With hints of childhood, tragedy, and the mundane, viewers are forced to examine what makes a person who

they are, and how the space around them chronicles their story.

Uniquely, this exhibit not only shows the audience a piece from the artists’ perspective but also transports them into the installation.

“I want our audience to feel confronted with something unique,” Rubio said. “The experience of entering a zone and a space that transports you and puts you in touch with some of those memories you haven’t touched in a while...is a really successful kind of encounter.”

Cannon found the exhibition of the bedroom to be the most stimulating to audiences.

“In general, the purpose of the show was to provide people with the opportunity to experience something uncomfortable, especially the bedroom piece,” Cannon said. “[It is able to] provide people the opportunity to scratch the itch of snooping around a stranger’s intimate space. That was a very palpable, emotional thing I wanted people to be able to release and take part in.”

Rubio found it important to curate the exhibit as an environmental performance due to the unique situation it puts audience members in.

“[Cannon and I] are very interested

in disrupting a traditional gallery experience, but we didn’t want the show to feel like objects on a wall that feel distant from the viewer,” Rubio said. “The goal was to have this emotional environment where when your body is inside of this space, you become a part of the space. Your thoughts and personal histories and form bring the space to life.”

Crafting an immersive installation creates a different experience compared to traditional art galleries.

“Gallery exhibitions and museum exhibitions, have this stark ‘hands off,’ kind of distance between you as an audience goer,” Cannon said. “I wanted people to be able to break that wall down and take part physically in the piece, because the living room piece with the shells and the objects, and the bedroom piece don’t work without that physical interaction.”

To Cannon and Rubio, the installation is less of a gallery and more of an attraction.

“We wanted to think about it as a truly immersive, theatrical world that you step into,” Rubio said. “It achieves an emotional impact, kind of like a haunted house in terms of

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# Sports

## New assistant coach joins women’s soccer team

**Jason Tulchin**  
Beacon Staff

The Emerson women’s soccer team expanded its coaching staff in preparation for the 2022 season, hiring former Ithaca College defender Kate Kohler as an assistant coach.

Kohler, who was on the 2018 All Liberty League All-Academic team and graduated from Ithaca in 2021, was hired as the Lions’ assistant coach just ahead of the 2022 preseason. She heard about the opening through her alma mater’s assistant coach, Javi Mejia, who is an Emerson men’s soccer alumnus.

“Emerson is an incredibly creative school, which is what drew me initially,” Kohler said. “I enjoy how close-knit the team is. It’s only preseason, but I can see how their connection is forged already. That’s something you can’t really train.”

Her addition to the team highlights the importance of having a female presence on the coaching staff—a presence some players say they lacked throughout their athletic careers.

“One thing I truly appreciate that the

coaching staff did was that they found a female assistant coach,” said sophomore defender Yoshiko Slater in an interview with The Beacon. “Growing up, I didn’t have many female coaches— head or assistant, so it’s wonderful to have a female coach.”

Like Slater, Kohler didn’t have a female soccer coach until her collegiate career. She hopes to be an empowering role model and coach the team to competitive success.

“Not only am I here as a coach, but as a mentor and a peer,” she said. “I’ve been in their shoes and no one really understands [the female perspective].”

Kohler’s background as a player gives her an advantage, bringing a veteran’s eye to the field and understanding the trials and tribulations of being a collegiate athlete.

“She’s played in college, so she knows what she’s talking about and [is] not afraid to give her input and support us at the same time,” Slater said. “When she’s giving her comments, it doesn’t feel like she’s critiquing us to



Kate Kohler is the newest coach in Emerson athletics. / Courtesy Darius Boamah

make us feel bad, it is constructive and really thoughtful. I appreciate her being there.”

Heading into the 2022 season, the Lions boast a seasoned roster of experienced sophomores, who make up 13 out of 25 players on the squad.

Looking to build on last season’s successes which saw the Lions secure a second place slot in the NEWMAC standings following a 1-0 defeat against Wheaton College, Head Coach David

Suvak is confident the team’s success from the 2021 season will carry over.

“I’m very optimistic about what the future brings for this group and that includes first-years and transfers that are coming in,” he said.

The Lions started the season with a 5-0 win against Regis College on Sept. 1 then traveled to California to play UC Santa Cruz, which ended in a draw.

The team’s unbeaten record was tar-

nished after a 4-1 loss to Tufts University on Wednesday—the Lions played three games while traveling across the country and back over six days.

The Lions have now tasted the sweetness of victory and the bitterness of defeat and look to bounce back in their next match-up on Sept. 13 against Plymouth State on Rotch Field at 6 p.m.

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### Scoreboard

#### Men’s Soccer

Sept. 1  
Emerson 0 . . . . at Roger Williams 0

Sept. 3  
Emerson 3 . . . . . Dean 0

Sept. 6  
Emerson 1 . . . . . Trinity 1

#### Women’s Soccer

Sept. 1  
Emerson 5 . . . . . Regis 0

Sept. 3  
Emerson 0 . . . . at UC Santa Cruz 0

Sept. 6  
At Tufts 4 . . . . . Emerson 1

#### Women’s Volleyball

Sept. 4  
Emerson 3 . . . . . Simmons 0

Emerson 3 . . . . . Manhattanville 1

### Upcoming

Sept. 8  
W. Volleyball vs. Brandeis . . . . . 6pm

Sept. 9  
W. Tennis @ Gordon . . . . . 3 pm

Sept. 10  
M. Soccer @ Suffolk . . . . . 6 pm

W. Volleyball @ Westrn N.E. . . . . 11 am

W. Volleyball @ Sthrn ME . . . . . 1 pm

XC - Smith College Invitational

Sept. 12  
W. Tennis @ Colby-Sawyer . . . . . 12pm

Sept. 13  
W. Soccer vs. Plymouth St. . . . . 6pm

M. Soccer @ Wentworth . . . . . 7pm

W. Volleyball vs. MIT . . . . . 6 pm

Sept. 14  
M. Tennis @ Stonehill . . . . . 4 pm

## Berville, French recruit, strives for growth

was one of the driving factors behind his commitment to Emerson. Majoring in sports communications, Berville says he’s looking forward to expanding his knowledge and continuing to hold a role in the industry, even if it’s not as a professional athlete.

“I’m really looking forward to learning as much as possible in the sports industry, because I don’t know where I’ll be in five years,” he said. “Whatever I do, I want to be in this industry.”

Though he has high ambitions for his education, Berville has by no means given up on his dreams of playing high-level soccer. He’s excited to join Emerson’s squad, which went 3-11-2 last season, and aims to kick the level of competition up a notch this year.

Head coach Daniel Toulson, now in his second year behind the bench, remarked that Berville will have an opportunity to play a role in the Lions’ push towards a higher level of play.

“We don’t set too many outcome goals,” said Toulson. “We’re really focused on having a player-led culture. We want a driven group that leads themselves, and that’s an area where Hugo can continue to contribute and learn.”

Berville is excited to contribute to a motivated Lions squad and also excited to continue developing his game this season through a consistent daily routine.

“Having a rhythm, a routine everyday... [is] what I’ve been dreaming about these past few months,” he said. “I want to be the best version of myself.”

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## Women’s volleyball team starts off strong with pair of wins

**Leo Kagan**  
Beacon Correspondent

Emerson’s women’s volleyball team dropped just one set in its season opener, beating both Simmons and Manhattanville College in a Sunday doubleheader on the Lions’ home court.

The team’s would-be first game against Assumption University was postponed last Thursday due to COVID-19, allowing the Lions to make their 2022 opening remarks in the Bobbi Brown and Steven Plofker Gym. NEWMAC Second Team All-Conference selection and sophomore outside hitter, Amelia Combs—who was set to miss the match against Assumption due to injury—posted 24 kills, six aces, 23 digs, and 31 points between both Sunday games.

“I was actually injured earlier this week,” she said. “I’m happy that I was able to join the team for the first game of the season. I feel like we really kicked things off with a bang.”

The Lions faced Simmons first, displaying a strong team effort and winning three sets in a row—the same result the team had in their match against the Sharks a year to the date. The Lions played consistently, never trailing by more than three points and rarely trailing at all.

Later in the afternoon the Lions beat Manhattanville in four sets, losing the first and then winning three in a row. Emerson’s first victory came after extra rallies became necessary, with the Lions winning 30-28 following an attack error forced by a strike from sophomore outside hitter Isabella Chu—who also scored the kill to put the team at match point in the previous play.

The final two sets were resolved in more decisive fashion, with the Lions claiming superiority by scores of 25-13 and 25-15.



Emerson’s women’s volleyball team in 2021 / Sydney Ciardi Beacon Staff

“Against Simmons, we were definitely playing a little tight—first game jitters,” said head coach Ben Read. “It was nice to see us clean things up throughout the day.”

Read noted the physicality of his team compared to its opponents, pointing out the strain the Lions placed on both teams.

“I think we were actually a more physical team than both teams we played,” Read said. “We were playing a little higher over the net when blocking and attacking. We made less errors than the team and put enough pressure on both opponents to get them out of system and help our defense.”

The Lions totaled 10 blocks on the day and kept momentum high resulting in multiple point-scoring streaks.

“[We had] high energy and communication,” said Combs. “It’s our first game of the season, so we’re still figuring it out. We focused on high communication to fix the errors that occurred during our play.”

Despite winning both matches, the Lions still believe they can improve. In particular, Read thinks the team

can better its timing and unity on the court.

“[We want to] clean up the hitter-setter connection,” Read said. “We have four setters and they’re all hitting off setters who have slightly different tempos. As we move forward, we’ll start to see more of the starting lineup play together to get those reps.”

Sunday’s wins brought the Lions a little closer to their goals of qualifying for the NCAA Championship Tournament and the NEWMAC Championship tournament. Now, the team looks forward to its next game, which will be at home against Brandeis University—the team who served the Lions their first loss last season in a thrilling five-set match—this Thursday at 6 p.m.

“We’re going to take what we did here today, and we’re just going to keep growing,” said Combs. “This game shows what we need to work on, so we’ll just take this as a first step, and we’ll just keep building on it.”

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